



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

IN THE GARDEN OF THE GULF.



WHILE I am neither a Mexican ranchman, an American cowboy, nor a Canadian trapper, and while my experiences have not been of the blood-curdling character, I have probably seen and known enough in my time to furnish pleasant and restful reading to such as care nothing for the sensational novel on the one hand, or the able but heavy review on the other.

Perhaps a few words about myself may not be unacceptable. My father was a sergeant in the Ninety-third Highlanders, and at the time of my birth the regiment was stationed in Fort-George, Scotland. The regiment was sent to Canada to assist in putting down the Papineau and Mackenzie rebellion, and after the troubles were over we made Prince Edward Island our home.

This island, first known as Saint John, then as New Ireland, and now as above named, was so called in honour of the father of our good Queen Victoria; it is now frequently spoken of as 'The Garden of the Gulf,' and is indeed an isle of great beauty. From east to west the island measures about one hundred and forty-five miles, and varies in breadth from three to thirty miles; and it has a population of about one hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants. Its agricultural capabilities are great; the soil is rich and productive, and is nearly all under cultivation. It was not so when I was a boy. Large portions of it were then covered with dense forests, in which the bear, the wild-cat, and the fox roamed in undisturbed security, and where the Indian was monarch of all he surveyed.

The educational advantages enjoyed by the youth of the island to-day are very far in advance of what they were in my boyhood's days. Under the free, non-sectarian system that now obtains, goodly buildings dot the land, in which well-trained teachers offer to all the blessings of a thorough common-school education. The teachers are paid out of the provincial treasury; and the child of the humblest has the same rights and

privileges with the child of the highest. It was not so in my time. Then the schoolhouse was a log structure, the light was dim if not religious, and the furnishings were of the most primitive character. Many of the teachers were young and inexperienced, poorly equipped for service, and poorly paid. My first teacher was a Scottish Highlander, a queer little fellow, full of airs, who never lost an opportunity to magnify his office. He taught both in English and in Gaelic, and had some original ideas concerning the training of children. When anything went wrong, he would require the whole school to stand, and, after delivering an harangue, in which big words would abound, he would whip us all, so as to be sure to punish the guilty ones. We often talked of mobbing him; but, as we were all little fellows, it always ended in talk. In this we differed from the boys of another school, the teacher of which was a very cruel man of the name of Coster.

In the neighbourhood of this man's schoolhouse was a steep hill extending about a quarter of a mile from the top to the level ground, and which in winter was the common coasting-ground for the neighbourhood. One day, when the teacher had been unusually severe, several of the taller lads took hold of him, hustled him outdoors, tied him securely to a sled, and sent him down the dangerous declivity, amid wild cheering, while one witty lassie cried out 'Good-bye, Mr Coaster.' It was a wonder he was not killed, for the way he went down that hill was enough to appal one; but he sustained no serious injury. That, however, ended his career as a teacher, and he soon took his departure from the scene of his inglorious adventure. While we did not use our dominie so badly, we did worry him not a little. However, he had his good points. He was interested in his work, was anxious to be helpful to us, and, to his credit be it spoken, awakened within the bosoms of some of these wild lads such a thirst for knowledge as led them to seek other and more capable instructors. Thus, before he joined

the great majority, several of those he proudly spoke of as 'My Boys' were filling important positions in Church and State.

Winter travelling on the island is sometimes very hazardous. This arises from the fact that all the rivers, bays, and the sea itself for miles from the shore, are solidly frozen over, and the ice is much resorted to by teamsters and travellers. As soon as it is considered sufficiently strong to bear heavy loads, holes are cut in the ice at certain points or crossings, in which are placed small fir-trees at short distances apart, as guides to those who travel that way. It is a great temptation to take to the smooth ice, and cross over from point to point instead of wading through the snowdrifts for perhaps three times the distance, around by a bridge. I have driven for a whole day, with the green salt-water under me, at from two to three miles from the shore, and on that route had to cross a bay fifteen miles wide. When the weather is fine, the ice smooth, and the traveller, with a good horse, is well wrapped up in furs, such a drive is delightful; a carriage-ride on a summer's day is not to be compared with it. But there is always more or less danger. In the very coldest weather there are what are called airholes, into which a careless Jehu may easily drive. There are cracks in the ice sometimes a mile long and sufficiently wide to let a team through; and to drop into one of these is no uncommon occurrence. When a horse goes through, the sleigh seldom follows, and if the driver has his wits about him he generally saves the animal. The first thing to be done is to draw a rope tightly around the horse's neck, when he will at once rise to the surface; and by a little skilful manœuvring he will be landed on the unbroken ice. I recall a case in which a man saved himself by his presence of mind. He had fallen through, and was in danger of being swept under the ice. His hands were encased in woollen mittens, which he dipped, first the one and then the other, in the water, and then laid them on the ice, to which they instantly froze, and by this he was enabled to sustain himself until his cries brought help. But the greatest danger to the traveller is when he is overtaken in a snow-storm, or when a fog settles down upon him. He is then absolutely without anything to guide him, and is liable to drive out to sea or into one of these dangerous airholes or cracks, and find a watery grave. More than once I have found myself in extreme peril. I have wandered for hours in the vicinity of open water, utterly bewildered, yet compelled to keep moving for fear of falling into the fatal sleep which intense cold produces. On one occasion, having mistaken the mark of an Indian's sled for that of an ordinary sleigh, I took the ice rather than the longer way round. I soon found the ice bending beneath our weight. I had a young lady friend with me, who, while realising our danger, kept perfectly

cool and self-possessed. The water was deep, we were about a quarter of a mile from the shore. To check our speed or try to turn was not to be entertained, so we did what the engineer does when he feels the bridge giving way: we sprang forward, and reached more solid footing as the water came rushing through the cracks behind us. And yet, considering the number of miles thus travelled, the many persons who daily pass to and fro upon the ice, and the large amount of business done in this way, there are indeed very few accidents.

As the island is thus ice-bound for about four months in the year, its people have had during that time comparatively little intercourse with those residing on the mainland. One of the conditions upon which they consented to connect themselves with the Dominion of Canada was the establishment of regular communication with the outer world during the winter. A steamer was specially built for the purpose, which was supposed to be able to break through the strongest ice, but she has not proved a success. The latest proposal is to construct a subway beneath 'the streak of silver sea' which separates the island from New Brunswick, and which at its narrowest part is only about nine miles across. Borings have been made in several places, estimates were laid before parliament, and the scheme has been pronounced a feasible one. In that case Jack Frost may do what he pleases with the surface of the waters; he will not be able to interfere with the passing of the iron horse underneath them.

In the meantime, the safest and the speediest means of communication is by what is known as the Ice-Boat Service. This has been in use a great many years, and every winter sees an increasing number of business men and others availing themselves of the opportunity thus afforded to reach the great outside world. Everything possible has been done to secure the safety and comfort of the voyagers; danger now is but little dreaded, and even women and children not infrequently take the risks. The distance between Cape Traverse on the island and Cape Tormentine in New Brunswick is only nine miles, and, when the weather is fine and the conditions favourable, the crossing can be made in three or four hours. The boats are furnished with both oars and runners, the first for use in open water, and the second for use on the ice. The shore-ice is usually good, in which case all may ride; but the serious part of the journey is when the boat has to be pushed or pulled through broken or floating ice. Then comes the exciting time. The managers with might and main work with oars and boat-hooks to force their way, or, with the passengers—women of course excepted—hold on to straps attached to the sides of the boat and seek to draw it along. Every now and then some one goes through and gets a cold bath but

is soon fished up by his travelling companions, who cannot afford to laugh at his misfortunes, as they may be in the same plight the next moment. Jumping from cake to cake of the floating ice, which may or may not be strong enough to sustain him, and slipping, scrambling, puffing like a porpoise or gasping with nervousness, the novice in such experiences furnishes good fun to those whose business has made all this an old story.

As already stated, the dangers attendant upon crossing the Straits have been so well provided against that accidents now are few in number and trivial in character. But, again to use an old man's phrase, such was not the case when I was a boy. I remember a very sad occurrence which took place in 1855. The ice-boat from Cape Tormentine, with three passengers on board, had almost reached the island shore when farther progress was rendered impossible by a blinding snowstorm. For five days and nights they drifted helplessly about, vainly endeavouring to reach land. During these dreary days and drearier nights all the food they had was the flesh of a little dog belonging to one of the passengers, and which they had killed and eaten. One of the passengers died from exhaustion on the fourth day, and all were badly frozen; had they not been rescued when they were they would all have perished in a few hours.

Owing to its exposed position, the northern and eastern coasts of the island are sometimes swept by tremendous storms. I have a very distinct recollection of one of these. It was away back in the fifties, during the period of the Reciprocity Treaty between the United States and Great Britain, when at certain seasons of the year the waters would be dotted over with American fishing vessels. The coast is a dangerous one. For miles and miles there is nothing like a safe harbour, and a reef of sunken rocks runs out into the sea for some ten miles, with scarcely water enough over it to float a canoe.

The day referred to was a wild one; the wind blew furiously, the sea ran high, and a drenching rain added to the gloom and discomfort of the occasion. All through that dismal day the poor fishermen laboured hard to keep off-shore, but many failed to do so. Vessel after vessel drifted by—sails, spars, all gone, and their crews perfectly helpless in the presence of the angry elements. Every now and then some boat would be driven upon the rocks, the waves would sweep over her, and the poor fellows on board be swept into the boiling flood. Towards evening one of the largest of the vessels was seen approaching the place of peril. Finding it impossible to bring her about, they let go her anchors in the hope of being able to outlive the storm; but the hope was vain. She, too, was driven ashore, and soon went to pieces. It was supposed all had perished, when those who were on the beach were thrilled by the

cry: 'There's a man with a woman in his arms.' Yes, sure enough, there he was, struggling with the wild waves, evidently determined to save her or perish in the attempt. 'Sure, thin, an' I can't shtand that,' said a brawny Irishman who was intently gazing at the man in the water. 'Indade, I can't. No doubt the poor craythur is his wife; and I'll try and help him, so I will.' Fastening a rope around him, and giving such directions as he deemed necessary, he plunged into the water, and for a time was lost sight of. Ere long he reached the heavily-burdened man, and after almost superhuman efforts succeeded in bringing him safely to land. Poor Pat was badly bruised, and to the end of life was a cripple as the result of his adventure; but he felt more than repaid when he learned all he had done. Carefully wrapped up and bound to the woman's bosom was a tender infant of a few months old. The husband had sustained comparatively little injury; but the wife was to all appearance dead. She was promptly cared for, and after some time gave signs of returning consciousness. Her first words were—'Winthrop—Eva.' Strange to say, the babe was unharmed—a beautiful blue-eyed creature—her sweet young face reminded one of what Moses must have been when rescued by the daughter of Pharaoh. Pat was not uncared for. He was taken by those he had befriended to their Massachusetts home, and spent the rest of his days in comfort, living long enough to see the child, his 'darlint Eva,' happy in a home of her own.

But here, as elsewhere, disaster sometimes comes to other than fishing vessels. I remember one case of shipwreck, the circumstances connected with which aroused a widespread feeling of grief and indignation. The regular steamer, with mails and passengers, was crossing the Straits from the island to the mainland, when, through some derangement of the machinery, the vessel became unmanageable, and was abandoned by the captain and a part of the crew. By clinging to portions of the wreck some of the passengers were finally rescued, but several found a watery grave; and among those lost was a young lady who had been visiting friends on the island previous to leaving for the Old Country, where she was to have been married. Her affianced had been pastor of a church in one of our cities by the sea, but had received and accepted a call to a church in the Motherland. Pressing duties had prevented his returning for his bride, and it had been arranged that he should meet her in Liverpool; instead of this he met the sad news that her body lay sleeping beneath the cold waters. The shock was too great for him, and for a time reason gave way. After his recovery from a long illness, he resigned his charge, sought rest and change in travel, and looked for death on the battlefields of the Crimea. He returned to his native land, recrossed the Atlantic; and the

last I heard of him he was preaching doctrines very unlike those which he had been wont so eloquently to proclaim to interested audiences—doctrines that neither Luther, Knox, nor Wesley would have endorsed.

In the days to which I refer farming was in its infancy, and men had in other ways to provide for their immediate needs. While the mother and younger children would care for the cattle and look after things around home, the father and grown-up boys would hire out for the winter with some 'lumber operator.' They would go to the woods in November, and, unless called home for some special reason, would remain there until the middle of March. In company with a few friends, I spent several days in camp, and never enjoyed an outing so much. There was certainly something wild and weird-like in the surroundings. Stretching away for miles in every direction was the unbroken forest, no human habitation near, and no sound to disturb the quiet of the night but the hooting of the owl or the barking of the fox. In the daytime the silence was broken by the ringing blows of the woodman's axe, the crash of falling trees, or the stentorian tones of the teamster as he warily guided his horses down some dangerous roadway. After the day's work was done, the horses cared for, and sundry other matters attended to, supper would be served, which was the principal meal of the day. This usually consisted of pork and beans baked in a pot buried in the fire, potatoes, bread and butter, and tea, without milk of course, sweetened with molasses. My! what appetites these woodmen had. The speedy disappearance of such piles of food was enough to make a miser groan, and furnished pretty conclusive evidence that lumbering had to pay well to cover the expenses of the commissariat department. Supper over, the men, fifty or sixty in number, would lie around the huge fire, smoking, telling stories, singing songs, or patching their garments.

As one of our party was a clergyman, during our stay we had a sermon and a lecture, notice having been sent to other crews in the neighbourhood. It was rather a picturesque gathering. A huge fire blazed away in the centre, the smoke from which found its way to the outer world through an opening in the roof. Around us were scores of rough-looking, unshaven men, clad in attire befitting their calling. The attention paid to the speaker was all that could have been desired, and the heartiness with which they joined in the singing showed they had not wholly neglected the gift of song.

During our stay we visited 'The Brows,' and saw how the lumber was 'yarded.' The brows are places on the banks of the streams from which the trees have been removed, the ground levelled, and made to slope away to the water's edge. To these places the logs are hauled, piled in heaps running parallel with the stream, and left there

until spring, when they are rolled into the water and floated down to the mills. This log-rolling is wild work. Skids are laid down from the pile along the descent, and on these the logs go bounding at a fearful rate. Sometimes several of these will start together, and then woe betide the man who is unfortunately a little slow in his movements, or who fails to get out of the way of the moving mass. Sometimes a man gets wedged in between two logs whose progress has been arrested, and, when perhaps after tons of timber have rolled over him, and his fellow-workmen believe he has been crushed to death, he is found almost without a scratch. Occasionally, however, a leg or an arm is broken or the body bruised, and now and then a life is lost; but the men know so well what to do under such circumstances that serious accidents occur but rarely.

Stream-driving takes place later in the season. On some of the brooks and streams dams are built, so that a sufficiency of water may be had if the snowfall has been light or the spring-rains not up to the average. When the time arrives to begin operations, the logs are rolled into the streams as above stated, and then run into the booms. The dam gates are then opened, the booms broken, and the cry is, 'Let her drive.' For a time everything goes well; log after log shoots away down the stream as swift as an arrow, each seeming anxious to out-distance the other. But the scene may suddenly change—a log gets caught on a rock or a sunken piece of timber, and then occurs what no pen-and-ink description can give any adequate idea of. Urged on by the force of the current, which grows stronger and stronger by this temporary check, the logs get piled up in enormous heaps, some lengthwise, some crosswise, and some standing erect or perpendicular. Then comes the tug of war. Like the keystone of an arch, one of these logs controls the situation, and by hook or by crook that one has to be dislodged. Courage is not so much needed as coolness—a sharp eye, steady nerves, and a sure and fleet foot are what are now required. Armed with handspikes (or, as they are termed, peevies), the workmen go out upon the logs and cautiously search for the one or ones on which so much rests. By the judicious use of these formidable tools, or by the cutting away of the obstructionist logs, the jam is broken, and to get out of harm's way as quickly as possible is the one thought of the drivers. As they leap from log to log, over this one and around that one, slipping, scrambling, and dodging such as threaten to harm them, an onlooker becomes greatly excited, and is terrified at the risks the poor fellows have to run. It is indeed alarming, and once seen is never forgotten. The rush and roar of the waters, the pounding and grinding of the logs against each other and against the rocks, the tearing away of the banks, and the uprooting of trees, and the shouts of the men

combine to produce a scene at once unique and indescribable.

There are other matters about which I might write, illustrative of the occupations, habits, and character of the people of this lovely little

island; but I must guard against an old man's weakness, and not weary the reader by overdoing my subject. I now, therefore, conclude my recollections of what has been done in 'The Garden of the Gulf.'

TREGAVIS THE CHEMIST.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.



WAS a night of miracles, Roscorla afterwards declared. When the two men bobbed up on the lumpy water, there was the great steamer plain enough, with its long hull and funnel and masts dimly outlined. The mist had suddenly cleared—the fringe of it was driving northward—and presently a glimmer of a moon made its brief appearance in the watery sky. There was much shouting on the big vessel, and a timely flinging of life-belts. The fishing-boat had not been sighted until a collision was inevitable; it sprang out from the mist like a phantom under the very bows of the steamer. The engines were stopped, and a boat was lowered to the heavy sea; then the vessel moved slowly astern. In three minutes the Langissack men were picked up, and were soon on the deck of the steamer, the objects of rough but kindly ministrations.

Strangely enough, the chemist was the better swimmer, and seemed little the worse for his immersion; but Johnny Roscorla was exhausted, and would have gone under but for a life-belt that floated to his grasp. The skipper came forward and greeted the rescued men. He was a little, corpulent man, with a red-whiskered face half-fierce and half-comic. He had been roused from his berth, and had come hurriedly on deck, grotesquely clad in dirty pyjamas and a pea-jacket. There was a leer of coarse humour at his mouth, and he had the look of a man not altogether sober.

'Fishing-boat?' he asked gruffly of Roscorla.

'Iss,' answered Johnny, shuddering, for he had swallowed a gallon of Channel water; '*Gilliflower* o' Langissack.'

'All picked up?'

'Iss—there's only the two of us.'

'Insured?'

'I believe so; but I can't tell 'ee, for ted'n my boat.'

'Well, I'm sorry enough for this bad job; but it's a mercy we fished ye up,' said the skipper. 'I'm Cap'n Bunker, at your service, and this coal-scuttle is the *Nautilus* o' Shields. You're not altogether unwelcome, for we're bound to Valparaiso, short-handed. 'Tain't exactly a pleasure-yacht, and the cargo's dirty, but I'll pay ye in clean money.' Then, as a light fell full upon Tregavis, the skipper cried in astonishment, 'What in the name of Glory have we here?'

Tregavis was standing by the mast like a man dazed. He had refused all invitations to go below. The anguish of his position seemed to have numbed his faculties. He had no feeling for himself, no sense of satisfaction at his near escape from death; he thought only of his hopeless errand, and for the moment despair paralysed him. He looked almost abject in his misery—his thin hair and beard hung in wet wisps, his saturated black garments clung to his lean frame and gave him a spectral gauntness, and his woe-begone eyes, half-useless in the loss of his spectacles, blinked feebly at an alien world.

'Tis Mr Tregavis the chemist,' explained Johnny.

'Chemist!' roared the skipper. 'By Jeremy! this beats all! I never carried a chemist before. It's as good as a doctor; and, by all that's blue! Doctor we'll call him, and this smutty old tramp'll fancy herself a liner. Doctor Trigger-avis; that's the ticket! He shall have the key of the drug locker in the morning; and if any of ye feel poorly for want of exercise—he! he! he!—the doctor shall prescribe for ye in gallipot Latin.'

Tregavis swallowed a gulp of brandy that was pressed upon him, and instantly his energy revived, and his agony of mind found vent in a wild outburst—'The child, the poor child!'

'What child?' asked the bewildered captain. 'I understood ye were all aboard.'

Clutching the skipper by the arm, Tregavis poured into him the story of the night's errand and misadventure, and told it with such feverish emotion that it penetrated the husk of the callous, besotted mariner, and awakened the sympathy of the man.

'I'll give you fifty pounds, captain, if you'll land me at Polveen!'

The skipper shook his head. 'It can't be done; any minute the fog might drift down upon us again. It's too risky. Our berth is in the open Channel.'

'A hundred pounds, captain!' cried Tregavis frantically. It takes a long time to make a hundred pounds in a chemist's shop at Langissack, where every old woman is a compounder of panaceas.

'No, no; it can't be done. I'm mortal afraid of this ugly coast of yours; it's peppered a darned sight too freely on the wreck-chart. The

best I can do is to put back, and land ye at Falmouth to-morrow.'

To-morrow! To the mind of the chemist there was tragedy in the very word.

The steamer was now abreast of the light on Penzele, which gleamed steadily enough in the clearer night. Tregavis looked toward the light, and knew that behind the shoulder of the promontory lay the little village of Polveen in its sheltered cove. Even yet there might be time. Yes! there was still hope; and with hope the spirit of the man grew Titanic.

'Take me in as near as you dare, captain, and I'll swim ashore!'

The skipper looked at the man in amazed admiration. Then he turned to Roscorla and asked, 'Is there any depth o' water to the lee of the Point?'

'Oceans of water,' answered Johnny; 'fathoms and fathoms! I've seed a big ironclad hug the Point so close as courtin!'

The captain was sober enough now, and his manner was free of his jibing humour born of liquor. 'I'll risk it,' he cried heartily, 'though my plain duty in such dirty weather is to keep the open Channel. As for swimming—good Lord! no man could live in such water; and I reckon you've had enough for one night. I've an old boat I'll lend ye, and ye can send it along to Plymouth any time, and I'll pick it up, maybe, when we come back.'

The heart of Tregavis leapt at the words. 'Good heart, captain!' he cried; 'the money'—

'I'll be blistered if I touch a penny of your money,' said the skipper gruffly. 'Fisherman, stand by the helm.'

So Johnny Roscorla, knowing the coast, stood by the man at the wheel and piloted the big vessel. Meanwhile he was relieved of his wet clothes, and rubbed down, and invested with spare garments, dry but grimy; and his own sodden raiment was tied in a bundle. But Tregavis declined all such ministrations; he stood in the bow, staring ahead in the hope of seeing the light of the coastguard's boat; but there was nothing visible on the black water.

Captain Bunker, now fitly attired, paced the bridge with his mate, and grimly watched the weather. It still looked dirty enough to the windward, and the blur might at any moment encompass them. There was little risk in the open sea, but it was a vastly different matter between the ragged promontories of this indented coast in waters strewn with rocks.

'This is an awkward business,' said the skipper; 'it looks like a coroner's job, and I'm sorry for the poor fellow. I reckon a druggist's shop is as bad as a river full o' shipping; it's as simple as sin to give a wrong turn to the wheel or put your hand on the wrong bottle. Then, where's your certificate?'

The waves that had been perilous enough to the little *Gilliflower* washed impotently against the huge sides of the steamer, and as they rounded the Point the turbulence of the waters perceptibly diminished. They were soon to the leeward of Penzele, and in the shelter of that mighty headland the sea was comparatively calm. There was a twinkle of lights ahead, where Polveen nestled in its cove, but no sign of a boat.

The steamer stopped in deep water at the very foot of the cliff, which rose—a vast screen of granite—nearly perpendicularly from the sea.

'I'm sorry I can't set ye ashore,' said the captain warmly; 'but this is a death-trap of a place, and I'm anxious to get out of it.'

So they lowered the little boat—it was old and leaky—in the quiet water between the steamer and the wall of cliff, and the two men of Langissack clambered over the side.

'Send the boat round to Widdicombe's, Sutton Pool!' shouted the skipper as Roscorla took the oars. 'Good luck to ye!'

Then with a valedictory whistle, fierce and prolonged, that startled the Polveen folks and roused to shrill emulation a colony of sea-birds, the *Nautilus* steamed out into the Channel.

In twenty minutes Johnny Roscorla, who pulled desperately, brought the boat to Polveen beach; and before it touched the shingle Tregavis leapt waist-deep into the water and struggled ashore through the surf, his legs swathed in ribbons of seaweed.

He ran across the heavy sand, and took the path up the cliff, dimly marked at intervals by chunks of whitened granite; and before him, on the brow of the hill, he could vaguely see against the sky the coastguard cottage, with a light in an upper window.

In the little chamber Richard Curtis, the coast-guard'sman, stood with his wife by the bedside of their sick child—a delicate, bright-eyed girl of five, with a pathetic cough.

'Come, my beauty!' he cried cheerily, 'an' take thy med'cine like a little woman. 'Tis brave physic'—he held the phial of amber liquid to the lamp—'look, 'tis just like sherry wine, an' it smelleth—good!' He put the bottle to his nose, but the muscles of his face belied his words. 'What doth it say? "Shaake the bottle." Aw, iss; that explains it. I thought the weather had gone mazed, round the Point; but I b'lieve 'twas only shaakin' the bottle! What do 'ee think father hath for 'ee in the pocket of his greatcoat? 'Tis the queerest little image of a merryman that ivver thee seed. I bought 'en for 'ee to Langissack; an' when you pull the coord the legs of 'en jerkies so nat'ral as life. Hast thee got a nub o' sugar ready for her, mother?'

He took a wine-glass, and, with his broad thumb on the ridge of the marked bottle, he began carefully to measure out the pungent liquid, when

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there was a heavy stumbling step upon the stair, and into the room burst a tall man, drenched, dishevelled, with terror in his face! With an inarticulate cry he crossed the chamber and grasped the arm of the petrified Curtis, and from the upturned bottle the liquid gurgled out upon the floor, filling the room with a strange odour.

Not a word was spoken, for Tregavis was beyond speech; but Curtis recognised the chemist, and something of the truth flashed upon his mind.

Then a spasm of agony contorted the face of

Tregavis; he clutched with convulsed fingers at the region of his heart, and fell forward upon the floor.

Richard Curtis, with a gasp of horror, bent over the fallen man, and the bewildered wife knelt beside him in helpless solicitude. They raised his head, and Tregavis gave a great sigh, and from his white lips came inaudible words that doubtless were 'Thank God!' Then the drawn features of the man relaxed into something like a smile—a smile of achievement.

The chemist was dead.

THE TRUE ENGLISH DEATH-RATE.

By ALFRED J. H. CRESPI, Wimborne, formerly Editor of the *Sanitary Review*.



THE annual meeting of the British Medical Association, at Clifton, in 1894, Sir Charles Cameron, the distinguished Medical Officer of Health for Dublin, in an address on Public Medicine remarkable for its clearness and vigour, handled, *inter alia*, the 'True English Death-rate for 1893,' a year conspicuous for bright skies and deficient rainfall. Sir Charles went very fully into some of the local causes raising or lowering the mortality. There died in England and Wales 19,170 persons per million—a rate comparing very favourably with that of a generation earlier, and perhaps lower than any other large, densely-peopled country can show; still a far higher rate than ought to satisfy us in our present state of knowledge. In the thirty-three very large towns of England and Wales, those with 100,000 and above, the deaths were per million 21,570; but when these towns were excluded, the rate in England and Wales fell to 17,900. The towns of the first order, be it noted, have a higher percentage of young people and of women than the country at large. Now, as women live considerably longer than men, and young people die (equal numbers being compared) in smaller proportion than older ones, important corrections must be made to ascertain the real death-rate of the great towns. When these corrections are made, the true death-rate in these thirty-three great towns is 23·32 per thousand, while in the rest of the country it is only 17·62; hence the mortality-rate of the great towns is 5·7 per thousand above that of the rest of the country. The difference between the lowest rural and the highest urban rate is absolutely enormous, and Liverpool shows an excess of 13·17 per thousand; indeed in that city there actually died in 1893 twice as many persons per thousand as in many other parts of England. In the outer ring of London, with a population of 1,543,296, the death-rate was only 15·4, and in certain metropolitan areas, like Hampstead, it was under 11, little more than one-third the Liverpool rate.

Life in towns can never be so healthy as in the open country—when, that is, there is a sufficiency of food, clothing, and shelter in the latter. The aggregation of many people on a limited area means bad air, greater liability to catch infectious disease, and less repose—the last a more important factor in the causation of ill-health than is generally supposed. The ceaseless roar of the traffic of London interferes with sleep and rest, and undoubtedly increases the liability to nervous ailments, and often leads to a premature breakdown. Nor can it be denied that the indigent, profligate, and degraded have a singular tendency to gravitate to the large towns. Now, these classes marry early, and are appallingly prolific. 'The poorer a man,' says Sir Charles, 'the more likely is he to marry, and it is a remarkable but undesirable fact that a man's desire for matrimony is in inverse ratio to his ability to maintain a family.' This is too well known to need any illustration.

In country villages there may be poverty, overcrowding, vice, and precarious employment; but there is better air, so that the pestiferous atmosphere of a great town slum is rarely found in a rural cottage. So notorious is it that the death-rate is lower among the well-to-do than Mr Sergeant, in a paper in the June issue of the *Journal of the Statistical Society* for 1864, argued that in any comparison between the death-rates of London and of Birmingham, an allowance of 1·5 per thousand should be given the latter to make up for the greater poverty of many of its inhabitants as compared with those of London generally.

There is hardly a surer test of the prosperity of a town than the number of domestic servants kept in it. Croydon had the lowest death-rate in 1893 of all the great towns—that is, those with at least 100,000 inhabitants; its corrected death-rate was 16·99. Now, it had, curiously enough, almost the highest percentage of servants—88 per thousand, or in the ratio of 4·4 per cent. to the heads of families. Bath and Hastings head the

sixty-two largest towns—those with a population between 50,000 and 100,000—in the number of their domestic servants, the former having 114 per thousand and the latter 111, while their respective birth-rates were, in 1893, 19·5 and 19·3, the death-rate being again 18·5 and 14·27 respectively; the large number of rich, elderly retired people in both those towns, but more particularly in Bath, accounting for a mortality heavier than one would look for in a health-resort.

In many manufacturing towns of the North the low percentage of servants is noteworthy: Liverpool has only 3·9, Manchester 3·1, Newcastle 4·7, Leeds 2·8, Sheffield 3·6, and Preston 2·4. Birmingham has 2·9 per cent. only. As a pendant to this, Dr Alfred Hill, the City Medical Officer of Health, recently told the magistrates that the Midland Metropolis contains 10,000 houses unfit for human habitation. Aston Manor, an important and most populous part of the town, has only 2·2 per cent. of servants—a quarter the Croydon ratio. The South of England shows far greater prosperity. Bristol has 5·7, Brighton 9·0, Plymouth 5·1, Portsmouth 4·5, and Devonport 3·4 per cent.

Another test of the prosperity of a town might seem to be the number of rooms in a tenement; but, strange to say, Sir Charles Cameron does not consider this test of any special value. Plymouth, a fairly healthy town, has 24·4 per cent. of one-room tenements, and 27 of two; while in Preston, infamous for nearly the highest death-rate in all England, one-room tenements are only 5 per cent. Devonport, a reasonably healthy town, has the largest proportion of one-room tenements—25·2; whereas Hanley, with its perpetual canopy of black smoke, its grimy houses, and general air of misery and dirt, has only one in a thousand. In other words, Devonport has two hundred and fifty-two times as many one-room tenements per thousand. In London 18·4 per cent. of the dwellings are one-room tenements. Kensington, royal parish though it is, suffers from poverty and overcrowding, as the last census sufficiently showed. At that time there were herded together 13,000 persons in 6400 single-room and 26,000 in 7000 double-room tenements. The death-rate does not invariably seem to be materially affected by this state of things, but the moral condition of the poorer classes must be; and in no direction can sanitary and social reform find greater scope than in providing more rooms per family, and, still better, more cottages.

As there is no way of increasing the number of houses in the heart of our great towns, where every foot of land is occupied, nor would the sanitary condition be materially improved were more people packed on an acre, the only remedy is to enable the working-classes to get out into the suburbs, where land is cheaper, and where, therefore, there is a better chance of finding cheaper cottages. Every factory removed into the suburbs,

every great school, hospital, or other public institution taken away, means so much the more room left for the many people compelled to remain. That the difficulty of removing factories cannot in all cases be insuperable is shown by the removal, some years ago, of Cadbury Brothers' cocoa factory from Broad Street, Birmingham, to Bournville, five miles from New Street Station, and the still more recent removal of Burroughs, Welcome, & Co.'s cod-liver oil and compressed drug works from Bell Street, Wandsworth, to Dartford. No special inconvenience was incurred in either case, the principals assure me, while ample space was found for the factories; and the workpeople were enabled to get better air, more elbow-room, and cheaper houses. The Cadburys have done wonders to help their people to build and buy bright, roomy cottages, and quite a large town of pretty, charming villas and modern houses is springing up round Bournville; while at King's-Norton, a little farther out, hundreds of good cottages, often owned by their occupiers, are being built. The late Mr Montague Williams, Q.C., attached great importance to the removal of large factories into the country as a good means of lessening the overcrowding in great towns. Where work can be got, there the workers must congregate.

At Hanley, the local authorities refuse to allow one-room tenements to be put up. It is a manufacturing town, the largest in the Potteries, and not the least smoky and unprepossessing. Many of the trades carried on in it are admittedly unhealthy; but, in spite of these drawbacks, the death-rate in 1893 was only 20·2. Is not this in part due to the absence of one-room dwellings?

In the great Scotch towns one-room houses, as they are called, are much more common than in England, and they have warm defenders among intelligent Scotchmen, who claim for them, among other advantages, greater cheapness. In 1873 they reached 32·8 per cent. of the total; but fortunately, according to the English sanitarians' opinion, the percentage is falling, and one may hope the time is not far distant when all towns, except the very largest, will see their way to follow the good example of Hanley, and forbid the erection of places which cannot be called houses, and which must be responsible for much of the vice, misery, and degradation of the working-classes. One can imagine the burst of public indignation were any of the great landowners of the South of England to sanction the building of one-room tenements on their estates. As it is, agitators sometimes allege that country cottages with three rooms should be closed as morally and hygienically objectionable, and yet in large towns there may be 20 per cent. of one-room dwellings and no constant supply of fresh air, as in the open country.

Dr Russell, of Glasgow, stated that in 1885 the death-rate of that huge city stood at 25; but in the one-room dwellings it was 27, in the two-

room 26, in the three-room 20, and it fell to 18 in the four-room. It is asserted, too, that in Berlin, in 1885, there were only 75,000 people out of 1,315,000 living in one-room dwellings, but that—*incredible dictu*—the former furnished half the deaths in that city. The statement is astounding, and surely needs confirmation; but, as it is accepted by Sir Charles Cameron—a most cautious and accurate statistician—one must assume that it is not absolutely impossible. After all, it is not merely the overcrowding in the poor tenements which accounts for the high death-rate among their occupiers. The poorest, most vicious, incapable, and unhealthy gravitate to the worst slums of our large towns. In other words, dwellers in the slums will always be the shortest lived and the most unhealthy and worthless, because they also are the poorest, most vicious, and least capable; and the great capitals of the world are unfortunate in attracting a large percentage of all these outcasts.

It is often contended that good class and sanitariously perfect cottage accommodation cannot be made to pay a reasonable return on the outlay. Sir Charles Cameron—and who can speak with greater authority?—tells us that in Dublin the Corporation has provided two-room tenements, with separate sanitary accommodation of the most modern kind, at two shillings a week, and this with no loss to the city treasury; in other words, the investment is sound, if not exactly profitable. But other authorities are now maintaining that these low rents do not pay any interest on capital.

According to Dr Hope, Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool, in the July part of *Public Health* for 1894, five hundred and seventy-eight houses were about to be demolished in that ill-omened city. These houses were filthy, dangerous, and falling to pieces. In the three streets in which they were situated the death-rates were respectively 63, 67, and 71 per thousand. What other proof is needed of the dependence of ill-health on bad house-accommodation? We began by saying that no other country showed such a low death-rate as England; in none, too, is the general standard of living higher, and in none are the comforts of life greater. So far so good; and yet we only seem to have begun the great work of sanitary reform as far as many of the poor are concerned. When, fifty years hence, every working-class family is decently housed, clothed, and fed, it is probable that the death-rate will not exceed eleven per thousand for the whole country. What a triumph that will be—an annual saving on the figures of last year of full six lives per thousand inhabitants.

Dr Tatham, the Superintendent of Statistics, in a paper on 'Changes in the Death-rates of England and Wales' in the supplement to the Registrar-General's Fifty-ninth Annual Report, 1895, has the following statements, which I have freely abridged.

Dr Tatham points out that in the decennium 1871-80 there was a mortality of 21·27 from all causes per thousand of the population. In the next ten years the mean annual rate fell to 19·08. This decline in the mortality at all ages was shared by both sexes in almost equal proportion; the rate among males falling 10·6 per cent. and that among females 10·0. The figures show a decreased mortality among females at every one of the age-groups into which the span of life has been divided for the purposes of the Registrar-General, and among males a decrease at all except the age-group sixty-five to seventy-five years. The experience of 1881-90, although agreeing in the main with that of the preceding decennium in showing a greater reduction of mortality at the earlier ages, differs from it in other important respects. For example, Dr Ogle, commenting in the previous decennial supplement on the varying incidence of mortality at different ages, showed that, while the rates had fallen at the earlier part of life, they had risen at the later. This was not the case in the decennium 1881-90, where a decrease was observed in both sexes at every age-group save one. Again, compared with the mortality in the preceding decennium, the rate among females in 1871-80 was found to have decreased more rapidly than among males; this inequality has now been redressed, for in 1881-90 the male rate actually decreased faster than the female. Perhaps the most significant difference between the two sets of figures lies in the fact that, whereas in 1871-80 there had been a considerable rise in the male mortality after the age of forty-five and in the female mortality after fifty-five, recent figures show that this rise has been almost completely stopped, the only rise of mortality, in the whole course of life, during 1881-90 having been the trivial one of less than 1 per cent. at the age-group sixty-five to sixty-seven among males.

In the last decennium, 1881-90, the mortality among infants under one, generally adopted as the most sensitive test of the health of a community, has declined. The rate of mortality among infants of both sexes under the age of twelve months was equal to 142 per thousand births registered, compared with 149 per thousand in the preceding decennium. In 1881-90 the infantile rate among males was 155 per thousand births, and among females 128 per thousand, the rates in 1871-80 having been 163 and 134 respectively. A considerable proportion of the diminution in the death-rate since 1870 is the direct result of 'improved sanitation;' but that the whole difference between the rates of the two most recent decennia cannot thus be accounted for is obvious. The published returns show that the birth-rate of England and Wales has in recent years been steadily decreasing. As recently as 1878 the birth-rate was 35·6 per thousand; since then the fall has been steady, and the rate at the end of

the last decennium did not exceed 30·2, and it is considerably lower now, and is still falling. It is obvious that this change in the birth-rate, continued as it has been for so many years, must affect the age constitution of the population; and, as the death-rate at different ages varies enormously, the aggregate rate of mortality must accordingly be modified. On comparing the mean age-distribution of the population in the decennia ending respectively in 1880 and 1890, it will be seen that the numbers both of males and females living between the ages of ten and forty-five years were respectively greater in 1881-90 than in the previous decennium. Sanitary conditions remaining unchanged, the effect of this variation in the age constitution of the population would reduce the mortality at all ages, and that this

has actually been the case may easily be shown. The *crude* or *uncorrected* death-rate at all ages in the decennium 1871-80 was 21·27 per thousand; but if the number of persons living in the several age-groups during that decennium had been in the same proportion as in 1881-90, the death-rate in the earlier decennium would have been, not 21·27 per thousand but 20·84. It is, therefore, the latter figure, not the former, that should be used for the purpose of showing the actual decrease in the death-rate since 1880.

Before the sanitary reformer there lies a great future; and one can say that, in spite of the hurry and turmoil of modern human life, the embittered competition—the unrest, in short—the prosperity of the United Kingdom is increasing, and premature deaths becoming rarer every year.

A DEMOCRATIC DECREE.

By ADAM R. THOMSON.

I.

EXACTLY at noon on the day before that fixed for the marriage of Queen Theresa of Nerumbia to her second cousin, Ernest, Hereditary Prince of Landberg, Captain Klunst, the chief of police of the capital city of Rosenstadt, was ushered into the private apartment of Count von Schönstein, the Queen's Principal Minister of State. He had come to Schönstein's residence in the Birnenstrasse by appointment; and the Count, though his furrowed countenance wore a look of deep gloom, received him graciously, and motioned him to a chair. Klunst sat down in silence, and waited with some impatience till the Minister, having carefully tied the papers on the table in front of him into a neat bundle, at length commenced the conversation.

'Well. I have seen the Queen,' he began in a low tone.

'Yes, your Lordship?'

'And it is useless trying to move her, worse than useless. She has thoroughly made up her mind, and is even prepared to accept my resignation if I persist in my refusal to have the monstrous decree I spoke to you about yesterday in readiness for her signature immediately after to-morrow's ceremony.'

'But,' said the other, 'it is madness—sheer madness.'

'So I represented to Her Majesty, Klunst, though not of course in those words. I pointed out that many of the prisoners she is so anxious to release are members of secret revolutionary societies—men and women who aim at the subversion of the constitution and the overthrow of the throne, whose freedom would even place Her Majesty in personal danger.'

'It is true, my Lord.'

The Count shrugged his shoulders. 'The Queen thinks not,' he said grimly.

'But what arguments did Her Majesty put forward?'

'None. She is a woman, and she does not argue. It almost makes one wish Nerumbia had adopted the Salic Law. I'll tell you what she did say, though. She hinted that my ideas are old-fashioned, and stated pretty plainly that, in her opinion, most of our political prisoners, as she pleases to call them, are the victims of police plots.'

'Monstrous!'

'Just so.'

'How can Her Majesty entertain such a notion?'

'I don't know, unless it is that she has been reading some of the French newspapers. But the origin of the evil is of no consequence. She dismissed me with an instruction to draft the decree, and to commence it with a preamble to the effect that Queen Theresa is—is—really I can hardly bring myself to speak the terrible words—is determined that her marriage shall inaugurate a new era.'

'A new era?'

'Yes, an era of—mark this, Klunst—absolute liberty to every one of her subjects.'

'Absolute liberty—in Nerumbia!' The captain laughed ironically.

Schönstein leaned back in his chair. 'I have explained the situation,' he said, 'and so far as I can see only a miracle can avert us from disaster.'

'Ah!' Klunst drew a long breath, then he remarked slowly: 'I have something startling to reveal to you, my Lord Count—something that perhaps—though not a miracle—may, after all, lead Her Majesty to reconsider the position.'

'What do you mean?' asked the Minister eagerly.

'I mean, your Lordship, that we have discovered the existence of the most diabolical plot ever conceived.'

'Yes, yes. What is it? Speak man—speak.' Schönstein half rose in his excitement.

'It is a plot to murder'—

'Not the Queen?'

'No; but the Prince, the bridegroom, to-morrow.'

'The Prince. Good heavens! Where? How?'

'In the Cathedral at the commencement of the marriage service.'

II.

'Details,' said Schönstein, after a brief, intense pause; 'details.'

Klunst bowed. 'They are precise, my Lord. Among those who have been given passes into the Cathedral is a certain Duchesse de Malville, who is supposed to be a member of the French nobility.'

'Yes; I recollect the name. She obtained her ticket through one of Her Majesty's ladies-in-waiting.'

'Whom we need not speak of, your Lordship, for she is merely an innocent dupe. She knows nothing of the supposed Duchesse's true character and antecedents.'

'You, Klunst, are better informed?'

'Yes,' said the other simply. 'This woman, whose real name is Adèle Léront, is an anarchist of the most dangerous type, young, fascinating, and—worst of all—sincere. She is utterly careless of her life, and is no doubt gratified at having been chosen by her fellows for the deadly work projected for to-morrow.'

'When was she so chosen, Klunst?'

'At a meeting held last night, a meeting at which the police were represented. The scheme of the crime was then discussed; and, to put the matter shortly, it was decided that as the wedding party walked up the central aisle, the woman should spring forward and stab Prince Ernest to the heart.'

The Count received all these particulars with the utmost calmness, giving no further sign of emotion than an occasional bite of his iron-gray moustache. Now he merely asked meditatively:

'Why should they wish to assassinate the Prince rather than the Queen?'

'I cannot say, your Lordship, unless it is that the clothes worn by a man afford less protection to the heart than those of a woman. Or it may be that they think an attack on the Prince is less likely to be anticipated than one on the Queen.'

'Ah! well; in any case the effect would be the same. There is of course an international organisation, and it is only the rank of the victim they care about. The Prince is a ruler of a larger

country than ours, and his murder could not fail to terrorise Europe. But, now, what do you propose to do?'

'To arrest this woman, my Lord.'

'And on what evidence?'

'The evidence of my officer; Sauber his name is. He obtained admission to the meeting disguised as a'—

'Never mind that, Klunst; I am quite aware of your methods. But have you no other witnesses?'

'No; though we can trace this woman's history for some years past, and prove that she has been in the habit of expressing the most revolutionary opinions.'

Schönstein was silent for a moment. Then he said decisively:

'The case is not strong enough.'

'Not strong enough, your Lordship?' The captain looked surprised. 'Why, any court'—

'Not strong enough for the Queen, I mean. She will simply believe the whole affair to be an invention of the police; and so far from abandoning her projected folly, will actually glory the more in its accomplishment. I know Her Majesty's disposition, Klunst.'

'What is to be done, then?'

'At present, so far as you are concerned, nothing—absolutely nothing.'

'I must not proceed with the arrest?'

'Certainly not.'

'But, my Lord'—

'I have no time for further discussion,' interrupted the Count. 'I wish to be alone now. I have much to occupy me. You have my instructions; if I find it necessary to vary them you shall be duly notified.'

With which he rose, and Captain Klunst, mystified and not a little annoyed, had no course but to take his departure.

III.

Left to himself, Count von Schönstein sat for several minutes trying to arrive at a solution of the most difficult problem with which he had ever been confronted. This was, briefly, how to utilise the plot revealed by the chief of police in such a way as to overrule the headstrong will of the young Queen. To arrest the would-be assassin, and endeavour to convict her on police evidence would, as he had at once seen and explained to Klunst, in all probability produce an exactly contrary effect on Her Majesty's mind to that he desired. What other action, then, could he take? For once the Minister felt nonplussed; he could not find an answer to the question. And yet on his finding an answer depended his future career, for he had taken up such a definite position in the matter of the suggested amnesty that he would be bound, should this be carried out, to resign his office. He was a patriot according to his lights, and he honestly believed the Queen's

design both foolish and dangerous. But he was also a strong and ambitious man, who hated to be thwarted, even by his royal mistress, and who could not contemplate with equanimity relinquishing the political power which was so dear to his soul.

What if he were to do nothing, beyond perhaps warning Prince Ernest at the last moment of his danger, and affording him police protection? If the Queen saw the man she loved actually attacked, and at such a time, she could hardly fail to experience an overwhelming revulsion of feeling. But the Count, daring as he was, hesitated to take a course fraught with so much risk, more especially as he liked Prince Ernest, and believed that later on, when love's first frenzy had somewhat abated, he would find in the Prince a powerful ally in opposing the democratic tendencies of Queen Theresa. No, no, the Prince's life must not be endangered.

He had come to this inevitable conclusion when his private secretary entered from an adjoining room, placed a budget of letters on the table, and retired. Schönstein opened one, two, three of these communications, and glanced at their contents without interest. Out of the fourth, however, fell a photograph, and he took it up with a half-start. It was not accompanied by any note, but was signed, 'Very truly yours, Arnold Farrington.' 'A remarkable resemblance,' murmured the Count, 'really remarkable.' He struck a small bell which stood on the table, and his secretary re-entered the room. The Count handed him the photograph, and began abruptly:

'Farrington, the leading actor in that English theatrical company which has been in Rosenstadt for the last fortnight, has sent me his photograph, Müller. You've seen him, of course?'

'I have, my Lord.'

'Good—isn't it?'

'Exceedingly.'

'Did it ever strike you, Müller—there was a hardly perceptible tremor in Schönstein's voice—that Farrington is extremely like some one we both know very well.'

The secretary looked at the photograph carefully for a few moments, saying at last:

'Well, my Lord, I never noticed it before; but I think you must refer to Prince Ernest.'

'Yes, yes; not only are the two astonishingly alike, but they are of the same height and build. I wonder now—he broke off abruptly—'when do these English actors leave us, Müller—do you know?'

'Their last performance is fixed for to-morrow evening, my Lord.'

'Ah! Well, Müller, I was present at the play they gave two nights since, and at its conclusion I sent for Mr Farrington and complimented him on his acting. It is, no doubt, in consequence of that interview that he has honoured me with his photograph. I should like to thank him for his

courtesy personally. Perhaps, too, I may give him some little souvenir—actors, I have heard, are fond of souvenirs; but, in any case, I want you to send a note to him—you can easily find out where he is stopping—and ask him to come here and see me after lunch, say at three o'clock. Let the note go at once by special messenger.'

Herr Müller bowed and left the room. The Count threw himself back in his chair, drew a deep breath, gave a low whistle, and muttered slowly to himself: 'At last I think I see a way, dangerous and difficult, too, not to say terribly expensive; but still a way. If only this English actor has sufficient pluck and impudence—and his countrymen generally are lacking in neither of these characteristics—then I—I believe I can give Her Majesty an object-lesson she will never forget, and at the same time save both Nerumbia and myself.'

IV.

That afternoon, probably for the first time in his life, Arnold Farrington was positively astounded. The Count made him a proposal so extraordinary that, but for the heavy monetary bribe with which it was accompanied, the actor would have esteemed the matter a huge joke. As it was, he hesitated, and raised one objection after another, to each of which, however, the Minister was ready with an answer. The upshot was that, having satisfied Schönstein, he left, taking with him, with many misgivings, a portrait of Prince Ernest of Landberg, a ribbon of the Order of the Gray Eagle, and a draft for a large sum on the Secret Service account of the Nerumbian treasury. Whatever happened, he could at least congratulate himself on having obtained payment in advance.

A little later Von Schönstein and the chief of police were again in conference.

'Klunst,' said the former, commencing the conversation, 'before we go any further, I want to be assured that what you told me this morning of the intended assassination of the Prince is absolutely true.'

'That is so, my Lord. I have questioned and cross-questioned my officer, and he is ready to swear to the accuracy of the most minute detail of his story.'

'There is no doubt, for instance, that the attack is planned to take place during the procession of the wedding-party up the aisle at the beginning of the service?'

'None whatever; on that point, as on all others, Sauber is quite positive.'

'Good! Then I have arranged this affair at last.'

'I am to arrest the Duchesse?'

'No, no; I told you before how futile such a step would be. Come, you shall hear everything; but, by heaven! Klunst, should a word ever pass your lips'—

'You may rely upon my discretion, my Lord.'

'Well, I suppose I may, especially since your interests, as well as mine, are involved. Let the Queen have her way, and unloose this disreputable horde of criminals, and there can be little doubt that, provided she is not meanwhile assassinated, her next step will be to abolish the police, which would abolish you, Captain Klunst.' The Count smiled grimly, and went on without waiting for a reply: 'On the other hand, let the Frenchwoman's attack be duly made, and Her Majesty dare not, simply dare not, outrage public opinion and—and my opinion—by proceeding with her ridiculous decree.'

'But I—I do not understand, my Lord. You cannot mean that we are to allow the attack to be made?'

'I do, though, Klunst.'

'I am lost in perplexity, your Lordship. Have you consulted Prince Ernest about this? Is he ready to take the risk?'

Schönstein twirled his moustache; he was quite enjoying the mystification of the chief of police.

'No,' he said slowly, 'I have not consulted the Prince, nor at this stage do I propose to do so. It is quite unnecessary.'

'Unnecessary?' The word came involuntarily from the captain's lips.

'Entirely. The Prince will not be exposed to any risk whatever.'

Klunst's face was a study; but he said nothing.

'Simply because,' the Count resumed, 'the attack will not be made on him at all.'

The chief of police fidgeted nervously in his chair, but speech was still beyond his powers.

'It will be made,' said the other, in a low voice, 'on a gentleman who has agreed to enact the part of bridegroom for the passage up the aisle only—Mr Arnold Farrington, the great English actor, who is visiting us just now.'

He paused, and at last Klunst managed by a gesture to signify his desire for further information. The Count was quite ready to gratify him.

'Briefly,' he explained, 'this is how matters stand: It has been arranged, as you know, that Prince Ernest is to wear to-morrow the uniform of a Captain of Hussars, with one decoration only, the ribbon of the Order of the Gray Eagle. Well, Farrington has in his theatrical wardrobe the requisite uniform, and I have lent him my decoration. Farrington bears a strong resemblance to the Prince, and, with a little make-up, it would be next to impossible in the dim light of the Cathedral to distinguish between the two men. You follow so far?'

'Ye-es,' gasped Klunst.

'H'm! It has also been arranged that Prince Ernest is to await the Queen immediately inside the great door at the west end of the Cathedral, when, after kissing his bride's hand, he, with the rest of the party, will at once move up the aisle. This part of the programme, however, the Prince will carry out by deputy, for his carriage—you

know he and I are to proceed to the Cathedral together—his carriage will be unavoidably delayed.'

The chief of police wiped his moist brow. 'But, my Lord,' he murmured, 'if this Englishman should be killed?'

'There is no fear of that. He is going to wear a coat of mail underneath his uniform. The only risk he runs is the really slight one of detection, for which he has been well paid. But now, Klunst, I wish you to note carefully your share in this transaction. First of all, the so-called Duchesse must be watched, and should she by any chance leave the city, the fact must be at once communicated to me.'

The captain bowed assent. 'Her movements are under observation,' he remarked.

'Now for yourself, then. You will post several officers in plain clothes near the central aisle of the Cathedral, and will, of course, be yourself among them. The moment the attack is made, Farrington will fall, and it will then be for you and those of your men who are not engaged in arresting the woman, to surround him before the Queen has time to intervene, and carry him quickly to the vestry at the south of the altar. There you must immediately get rid of the men, and an instant later the Prince and I will join you. The Prince, whom I shall have meanwhile taken into my confidence, will then himself go into the Cathedral, explain to the Queen in a hurried whisper that he was not wounded, but had merely fainted with excitement, and the interrupted ceremony will be proceeded with. So shall we save Nerumbia.'

'Your instructions are difficult to give effect to, my Lord,' said the chief of police, gazing at Schönstein admiringly; 'but I will do my best.'

'Till we meet to-morrow, then, Captain Klunst, farewell.'

'Farewell, my lord Count—till to-morrow.'

'We are to commence a new era then, you know,' added the Minister, with a laugh, as the other rose to go.

'Ha! ha! a new era!' echoed Klunst, closing the door behind him.

V.

It was the season of winter, and the next day proved cold and gloomy. Nevertheless, long before the hour of one, at which the wedding was to take place, the streets of Rosenstadt were gaily decorated with flags and bunting, and were thronged with crowds of merry-faced citizens who had turned out to do honour to the occasion. Arnold Farrington noted all this as he lay back among the cushions of a closed carriage, listening dreamily to the pealing bells, and wishing his adventure well over. It had been the publicly expressed desire of the Prince of Landberg to be permitted to proceed to the Cathedral quietly, so that Farrington was not worried by any inconvenient demonstrations *en route*. Arrived at his

destination, however, he grew somewhat anxious, for here he had to encounter the Burgomaster, explain that the Count von Schönstein had been detained for a few minutes, and submit to be escorted up the stone steps of the Cathedral, and so through the great door to the spot at which he was to await the coming of the Queen. He dismounted from the vehicle, and his fears were immediately set at rest. The hours he had devoted to his make-up had brought their reward; the obsequious officials who stood bowing before him had evidently not the slightest doubt as to his identity with the Prince. He entered the Cathedral just three minutes before one; and, as he gazed at the richly-dressed personages who thronged the vast nave, speculated calmly as to the precise position of the woman who was to attack him.

On the stroke of the hour, cheers from without announced the advent of the young monarch, and at the same moment the Count and the Prince of Landberg alighted unobserved at a small door at the other end of the building. Schönstein's only ground for uneasiness was over; he had told his story to the Prince in such a way as to gain His Serene Highness's assent to the steps taken for his safety, and for Nerumbia's safety, and for the safety of the Count. Together they entered an unoccupied vestry, and awaited events with confidence.

The mighty organ pealed forth; the procession must have started up the aisle. Another moment and—unemotional man as he was—the Count's heart began to beat wildly. If the deed should cause a panic? But no, no; Klunst was a reliable officer; he would prevent anything of that sort!

Some seconds passed; but nothing seemed to have happened. Then the organ ceased, and the two men in the vestry distinctly heard the resonant voice of the Archbishop beginning the marriage service.

Schönstein's brow grew moist, his lips parched; he had comprehended the terrible truth. The attack had not been made. The passage up the aisle had been accomplished in safety! He could find no words in which to reply to the dismayed look of inquiry cast upon him by the astonished Prince.

There was a noise at the outer door, and Captain Klunst, his face blanched, his limbs trembling, stood before them.

'My lord Count,' he panted, 'what is to be done? This woman Lèront, this anarchist, has failed us. She is not in the Cathedral.' He paused for breath.

'Go on,' muttered Schönstein feebly. 'She has escaped?'

'No, no; her lodging was too carefully watched for that to happen. But she must have found out

that we were watching her. She has simply kept indoors. That is all.'

'All!' echoed the Count.

'All!' cried the Prince excitedly. 'It is not all. Why—why, good heavens, Count!—while we three are standing here, Theresa—the Queen—my Queen—is—is being married to an English actor!'

The Count groaned; but could offer no suggestion. He and Klunst looked at one another blankly. The tension was becoming unbearable.

'Fire! Fire! Fire!'

The cry came from within the Cathedral, and was followed by a stampede, and the shouts of the excited people rushing for the great west door of the building. Another moment, and into the vestry burst the man who had raised the alarm—Mr Arnold Farrington.

'I—I had to do it,' he gasped, addressing the Count. 'Why, they were actually marrying me to the Queen, and I—I have a wife in England. There is nothing like a cry of fire to clear a place quickly; and, goodness knows, in this suit of mail I was hot enough to do the thing realistically. No one will be hurt, the exits are too good. By Jupiter!' he added, 'here comes Her Majesty!'

For answer, the Count, who, in the presence of a pressing danger, had recovered himself, seized Farrington by the arm and hustled him out of the vestry into the street. His carriage was still waiting, and the two men jumped in.

'I have failed to save Nerumbia,' said the Count hastily; 'but there is yet time to save myself.'

'And me, I hope,' remarked Farrington. 'I guess I'd better get away from this country of yours as soon as convenient, Count.'

'Like fury to the railway station,' cried Schönstein to the coachman.

Thus abruptly did the Count von Schönstein bring his political career to an end. A more pliant Minister was immediately appointed in his stead, who, at the conclusion of the deferred marriage-ceremony on the following day, presented for the Queen's signature a decree giving immediate liberty to all prisoners throughout the realm. Whether this will lead to the direful results anticipated by the Count time alone can show. It has since come to the knowledge of the chronicler of these events, however, that the Duchesse de Malville, *alias* Adèle Lèront, was allowed by the demoralised police to make good her escape, and also that at present Queen Theresa is well and happy. At the same time, there are said to be matters connected with Her Majesty's first attempt at matrimony as to which she in vain seeks enlightenment from her prudent and far-seeing spouse, Ernest, Hereditary Prince of Landberg.

'CLOSE CALLS' IN THE ROCKIES.



IN North-Western parlance a 'close call' means a narrow escape from some danger. Section-men—that is to say, the railroad navvies—on the Great Northern Railway in the Rocky Mountains often have exciting escapes from being run over by trains, from being crushed by rocks or falling trees, and from being buried under snow-slides.

There were four men on the western part of the 'Summit Section,' at the top of the Marias Pass, in the Rockies. The grade there was very steep, and there were also two or three small tunnels. It was difficult to tell of the approach of a train, owing to the crooked nature of the track and to the fact that a mountain river, the north fork of the Flathead, ran close to the rails, making a considerable noise by its pitching over rocks in a string of cascades and waterfalls. For these reasons we had several narrow escapes from being run over; but although we had orders to travel slowly on our hand-car (a flat car running on four wheels, and propelled by men standing on the car and alternately pulling and pushing a double-handled lever), we paid but little attention to orders if we were in a hurry; and often we would rattle down the mountain-side at the rate of thirty miles an hour, the car going by its own momentum, with one man standing on the brake as we rounded the curves. There was glorious sport in dashing down that mountain-track, through scenes of a grandeur which cannot be told, towering mountains on one side, a precipice and a roaring river on the other. Round the corners of rock-cuttings we would swing with a dash, fresh pictures leaping into view every moment.

The foreman, a burly Irishman, would suck at his dirty little black pipe, seemingly deaf and blind to all around him, but really keeping a sharp lookout ahead, and listening intently for sounds of trains. Often we would start out knowing that the passenger train was not far behind us, and then indeed we would have a wild, reckless run. And one day we came to grief.

We were at our old trick of running ahead of the passenger train, and merrily we bowled along. But we did not know that the passenger train had received orders to wait at a side-track, so that a fast 'special' coming from the west might have a clear track. Just as we came to tunnel No. 3, about one hundred yards long, we heard a whistle sounding from the west.

'My God, boys, there's an "extra" coming up the hill!' shouted the foreman.

We were at that moment dashing over a trestle bridge about sixty feet high; to jump safely was impossible. At the end of the bridge was the tunnel, and it was equally suicidal to think of jumping off while running through it. At the

other end of the tunnel there was a place where a daring man *might* not break his neck if he jumped off the car; but fast approaching that other end of the tunnel was the swift 'special.'

Unable to slacken our furious speed, we dashed into the tunnel, well knowing that we might meet death in that blackness. It seemed a terribly long tunnel, though we flashed through it in a few seconds of time; and right at the other end we met the 'special.' The last thing I remember seeing was the foreman, still holding the black pipe in his teeth, and staring in a dazed manner at the engine bearing down upon him. Then there was a crash. I suppose I must have jumped or been thrown to one side; I soon picked myself up, nothing the worse, except for a few bruises.

The 'special' stopped, and the superintendent of the road, who was on board, got down and began to make inquiries. 'Who was the foreman of this gang?' But the Irishman had been smashed into a horrible, unrecognisable mass. So too had another of the men, a genial, light-hearted Highlander. Poor chap! I used to write letters for him to a girl he loved, 'back east, in God's country.' The third man, a Norwegian, had both legs broken. Now, that was a 'close call' for me.

I used to think that the mountains frowned upon us for daring to bring into their domains the smoke and rattle of our miserable railway, for sometimes they would hurl monstrous boulders at our trains; and in these acts they would often show a cunning that seemed more than human. The track-walker, on the lookout for fallen rocks, would pass along the track a few minutes ahead of a train; and, as soon as he had turned a corner of the road, down would come a huge rock weighing several tons. Then messages would flash along the wires: 'Freight No. 15 in the ditch at Bad Rock Canyon. Broken rail caused by falling rock. Send wrecking crew.' But more than once it was the passenger train which was the object of the spite of the mountains. The engineer, leaning out of his cab window, would round a curve and see, a few yards ahead of him, a great block of stone resting wickedly on the track. Instinctively his hand would fly to the air-brake, he would shut off steam and let out sand (engineers seldom use the reverse lever in such cases); but crash into the rock the engine would go, rear up, roll over and over, snapping the trunks of the pine trees on its way into the river, some hundreds of feet below the track. Then the Chief Despatcher, sitting in his office at the end of the division, would hear the sounder click out the words: 'No. 2 ran into rock eight miles east of summit. Engine, baggage, mail-car, and day-coach ditched. Engineer, fireman, mail-clerk, and one passenger killed; several injured. Send wrecking outfit and doctors.'

And upon one occasion the special train, consisting of the Wrecker (a machine for raising overturned cars and picking up wrecks) and a coach with doctors and railroad officials, were steaming quickly to the scene of an accident when an evil-minded mountain threw a stone with such good aim that it struck the engine and toppled it over, and the wrecking crew, the doctors, and the railroad officials were piled up in a heap. Now, that mountain could have thrown stones at that place at any other time during any of the days in any of the centuries of years that had gone before, and probably no harm would have been done. But no! With a diabolical cunning he chose just the second of time in which he could do the most mischief.

Yet the snow-slides are even more to be dreaded than falling rocks. If you pass through the mountains in the summer-time you will notice broad pathways cleared through the forests on some mountain-side. These are the tracks of the snow-slides; for a snow-slide clears a way for itself, and cuts off trees in its path like a man shaving himself with a sharp razor.

On the 31st December 1892 the passenger train was stuck in a snowdrift at Bear Creek, in the heart of the mountains. A snow-plough, engine, and train-load of 'dagors' (Italian navvies) were despatched to the place, with orders to dig out the 'stalled' train. I went with the party, as the men on our section were also impressed into the work. But we could do little or nothing, and just before noon we started on our way to the section-house for dinner and to get reinforcements of men.

The train was backing down the hill—that is to say, the cars were being pushed by the engine. I was riding on the engine, sitting on the fireman's side of the cab, and talking to the fireman. The engineer pulled the whistle cord, as usual, just before rounding the curve on the side of Mount Donnington; and that whistle was probably the cause of the trouble which followed. Under certain conditions of snow, temperature, and atmosphere it takes very little persuasion to start a snow-slide. Perhaps it was our whistle which stirred the snow at the top of Mount Donnington, nearly a mile above us.

At first the loosened mass was a small one; but it rapidly gathered immense force and volume, and swept like a torrent, some hundred yards wide and sixty feet deep, bringing with it rocks and trees, down the mountain-side, straight towards us. The brakeman, who was standing on the top of a car, saw it coming, and gave a wild, inarticulate cry. We on the engine saw it; the engineer gave one glance, then threw the throttle wide open, putting on full steam in the hope of pushing his train past the worst of the slide, even though it were at the sacrifice of his own life. It was a brave deed, a noble deed; and by it he saved the lives of thirty men who were in

the car farthest removed from the engine. That car was overturned, it is true, but no one in it was seriously hurt. But the rest of the train?

A snow-slide travels with a terrible roaring, hissing quickness, and in an instant that great wall of snow was upon us. As though they had been toys, our train and engine were swept off the rails, turned over and over, and buried fifty feet deep in hard-packed snow. The fireman and I sat like dazed men and watched the slide coming at us, for we could do nothing. The front wave of the slide poured into the cab window, swept us through the window on the opposite side; and, incredible as it may sound, we were borne on the crest of that slide some three or four hundred feet into the river valley beneath the track.

I knew nothing from the moment the slide struck us until I saw the fireman, with a bleeding face, bending over me and trying to drag me out of the snow. We were badly cut by broken glass; I had also a scalded hand, caused, no doubt, by snatching at and breaking the water-gauge glass as I was being swept through the cab of the engine.

The engineer and four other men were killed by that fearful slide. Late that night, after much hard digging, their bodies were recovered, crushed out of all likeness to human beings. But the fireman and I were all right again in a week or so.

Now, two years later that same fireman fell downstairs in his own house, broke his neck, and died. Fell downstairs a few feet in a little, one-story wooden house, and died. Yet this man had ridden on a murdering avalanche. Queer—isn't it?

RECONCILIATION.

THE West glows softer and the breeze blows mild,
Each flower is nodding like a sleepy child.

I come to you, O Love! to make my prayer—
Let us be reconciled.

Say that the words we had to-day were wild,
Unmeaning, thoughtless, written in the air,
To be destroyed by dusk beyond repair.

Who was to blame? Must we go back to find
The grain we fought for? Nay; mine eyes are blind.

I swear all search is vain so late, my dear:
And I am quite resigned.

'Tis past!' the West declares; and in the wind
There breathes a sigh, 'Forget!' and I can hear
The flowerets lip 'Forgive!' O Love, draw near.

We, who did quarrel on this summer day,
Are met together when its eve grows gray.

And surely, sweet, in this last little light
Your heart shall bid me stay.

I know we said 'good-bye,' and turned away
When all the world beneath the sun was bright...
But now, it seems, we cannot say 'good-night!'

J. J. BELL.